

lionel johnson was a better christian;
ernest dowson had better taste in women.
on his tour of germany he found
the attire of the storm troopers
more conducive to the public morals
than marlene dietrich's stockings.
the list of things by which he currently
feels threatened ranges from roller skates
to toga parties.

he continues to contribute,
with conspicuously ineluctable success,
to the decay of language.

ANGLO-FRENCH INGENUITY

I intend to concoct a cereal out of mushrooms
and to advertise it as "Breakfast of
Champignons."

FATHER OF LIES

i'm taking my daughter to get a passport
and i ask her if it will be a hassle
should she be late getting back to school.

"oh no," she says, "the last time i was late
i just said that there'd been an accident
at a corner where i was crossing the street
and that i'd had to make a police report."

"how in the world did you think of that?"
i ask her.

"oh, i heard one of the mothers
at the pre-school say that once,
so i knew it would work."

now i know my daughter is not a pathological liar,
and i know she doesn't even like to miss school.
i know that she takes a little more after her mother
than after me in regard to fibs.
i'll lie if i have to,
but her mother positively enjoys
putting people on.

still, i feel as if i should probably
offer some sort of fatherly moral counsel.

until a conversation pops into my head
that i once had with a wise and experienced
friend of mine.
i had said something about saving my lies
for important situations,
and he just shook his head and replied,
in the manner of sidney greenstreet in the big sleep
"gerry, it is not a talent
you can turn on and off at will.
lie every chance you get:
the more facility you develop,
the more convincing you'll be
when the really big lie is finally called for."

of course he was right.
i didn't follow his advice and,
as just one example of honest not being the best policy,
i once had my car insurance cancelled
when i admitted living in actuarial sin.

so now i shut my mouth
and concentrate on getting my daughter
back to school on time.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

HOTEL FELIX

the Hotel Felix near Beverly and Vermont had many
qualities including an old man in room 101 who never
left his bed and always sat straight upright in his
underwear and he claimed he was the F.B.I. and he
arrested me almost every night we drank cheap wine
together.

but Big Benny was best: the sound of him -- about
once a week -- was known to all of us: he'd fall
down the long stairway -- 32 steps -- slowly and with
high dramatics (he had an egg-shaped head and very
long legs) and every time with his last roll he'd
kick out his feet and break the glass in the glass
doorway -- the glass which proclaimed:

H O T E L F E L I X

REASONABLE RATES